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ABSTRACT

This report presents a history of school superintendents in the District of Columbia from 1865 to spring 2000. Research revealed major issues of race, control by Congress, and changes of governance each half-century: 1865, 1900, 1954, and 2000. The analysis is based on the annual reports and minutes of the board for the 2 centuries, histories of the school system, and newspaper articles. Until 1967, black superintendents and board members led the black systems or divisions, and whites guided the white and mixed systems, resulting in the development of black school leaders and teachers, and a black school system touted nationally until recent decades. Personal characteristics of superintendents revealed that congenial, deferential superintendents enjoyed longer tenure than charismatic change-agents. Although similar to other school systems on many issues, D.C. is unique in that it is controlled by the U.S. Congress. In one recurring pattern the school board would demand data-heavy reports to justify replacing the superintendent, just before Congress would mandate new governance. Another pattern was the consistent underfunding of school facilities by Congress and the City Council, until conditions required Congressional appropriations. In the year 2000, Congress again intervened and the structure of the board was placed on a referendum. (RJM)

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Superintendents, Boards, Governance and Race:

A Century and a Half in the District of Columbia

A paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the
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Abstract

A history of school superintendents in the District of Columbia from 1865 to spring of 2000, revealed major issues of race, control by Congress, and changes of governance each half-century – 1865, 1900, 1954 and 2000. The study relied upon Annual Reports and Minutes of the Board for the two centuries, histories of the school system and newspaper articles. Black superintendents and board members led the Black systems or divisions, and whites guided the white and mixed systems until 1967, resulting in the development of Black school leaders and teachers, and a Black school system touted nationally until recent decades. Personal characteristics of superintendents revealed that congenial, deferential superintendents enjoyed longer tenure than charismatic change-agents. Although similar to other school systems on many issues, D.C. is unique in the control exercised by Congress. In one recurring pattern the School Board would demand data-heavy reports to justify replacing the superintendent, just before Congress would mandate new governance and School Board. Another pattern was the consistent underfunding of school facilities by Congress and the City Council, until conditions required Congressional appropriations. As of the year 2000, Congress has again intervened, and the structure of the Board is a referendum issue.

Superintendents, Boards, Governance and Race:

A Century and a Half in the District of Columbia

This study began as a case study of school superintendents in the District of Columbia and sought to identify any major themes or characteristics of their terms in office. The study used an iterative approach based upon Guba's naturalistic inquiry in which tentative findings are examined in the light of additional research, which then results in new tentative findings. The discovery phase is followed by a verification phase, and so on (Guba, 1978, p. 54). Use of the model resulted in new insights during each phase. Because the additional research reflected on all the prior tentative finds, the reductionist, verification phase of the model had to await the end of the study.

The initial discovery phase of the study concluded that two issues dominated the history of public schooling in the District: race and Congressional control. There were also factors of more immediate concern to superintendents, one of which was their relationship with the Board of Education. One young Kansas teacher stated in 1917, "Look with suspicion upon the teacher who tells you he bosses the school board. He is either a liar or a one-termer, and the probabilities are that he is both" (Tyack, 1974, p. 18). The same could be said of a superintendent.

Following the initial study, the second iteration was guided by the following themes:

1. Major issues of governance occurred at half-century demarcations:
   - 1865 – 1871 Appointments of superintendents for the Cities of Georgetown and Washington, County of Washington, and Colored Schools of Washington and Georgetown
   - 1900 – Establishment of two separate school divisions: one white, one colored

- 1954 – Bolling v. Sharpe, companion decision to Brown v. Board of Education creating one integrated school system.
- 1996 – Authority of the Board of Education was suspended until the year 2000.

2. Racial issues affected changes of governance
3. The U.S. Congress sees itself as overseer of the school system and will intervene as it deems necessary.

These issues are particularly relevant this year, 2000, during which the powers of the Mayor, City Council and Board of Education have been given by the Congress to its appointed Control Board. Authority in the case of the Board of Education was to have been restored by June 2000, but now a referendum will go before voters in September asking them to approved a reconstituted Board made up of both elected members and members appointed by the mayor.

In the third phase of the study, trends emerged and certain events appeared to reoccur, postulating an episodic nature of organizations. Specific patterns to be studied for D.C. Schools were:

- Congress has consistently underfunded the District schools, and had to step in periodically to restore solvency.
- Periodically, the School Board would demand that the superintendent provide a detailed, data-heavy report which could then be used to justify replacing the superintendent. Soon afterwards, however, the entire Board would be relieved of its power by the U.S. Congress or District Commissioners.
- The District had separations not only between Black and white communities, but also between upper/middle and lower class Black families, as well as between upper/middle and lower class white families.

Evidence reflecting on the above issues can be found in an overview of the history of superintendents in the District of Columbia. Many of these issues will have parallels in other school systems, other urban settings, and other organizations. The uniqueness of the District is in the control of the school system exercised by the Congress of the United States, which has retained a special responsibility for the District of Columbia.

Documents were reviewed, such as the official histories contained in Annual Reports and Minutes of the Board for both centuries, records of the Charles Sumner Museum and Archives, histories written of the D.C. Schools, publications of the Columbia Historical Society, periodicals and journals, such as the Journal of Negro Education, and newspaper articles from both the Evening Star and The Washington Post. Additional resources still remain to be studied. The author's experience working in the D.C. Public Schools, mainly in central administrative posts from 1968 through 1999, served to give a context for understanding which themes were impacting the superintendent and Board of Education. Issues of the day were not highly emphasized because all days, ages and times have issues. On occasion, however, these issues bring about serious contention among the Board members, fundamental change in governance, dismissal of a superintendent, or an excuse for change. These issues are addressed.

Reflecting back upon the 200 year history of public and private schools in Washington, D.C. revealed a pattern where local school organization and governance were controlled by the Congress, and were structured around issues of race. The major points of demarcation fell at the century and half-century. Within that structure, historically displayed in Figure 1, superintendents dealt with many changes. Public schooling began with the first half of the 19th Century:

1805 – 1865

At the turn of the century, the nation's capital was organized into (1) the City of Washington, (2) the City of Georgetown, and (3) the County of Washington. In 1805 the City of Washington organized its public schools and established a Board of Trustees. Their first president was President Thomas Jefferson. The City of Georgetown organized in 1810 (Wilson, 1896, p. 120, 122). The public schools were available only for white students, primarily boys.

Figure 1

Acts of Congress and Historical Survey of Superintendents of Schools for the District of Columbia

Acts of Congress	1805 City of Washington Public Schools organized with Board of Trustees	1810 City of Georgetown Public Schools organized with Board of Trustees	1864 County of Washington Public Schools organized with Board of Trustees	1864 Colored Schools of Washington and Georgetown Public Schools organized with Board of Trustees
				Alonzo E. Newton 1865 – 1868
	Zalmon Richards 1869 – 1870			George F. T. Cook 1868 – 1870
		J. Ormond Wilson 1870 – 1871		Alonzo E. Newton 1870 – 1871

1871 Territory of the District of Columbia established with 4 Boards of Trustees	Superintendent of Cities of Washington and Georgetown reporting to the territorial government	County of Washington reporting to the territorial government	Colored Schools of Washington and Georgetown remained under the Department of the Interior
	J. Ormond Wilson 1871 – 1872	Benjamin P. Davis 1871 – 1872	George F. T. Cook 1871 – 1873

1874 The four Boards of Education consolidated into one Board of 19 members	Cities of Washington and Georgetown consolidated with County of Washington, 1872	Colored Schools of Washington and Georgetown placed under the Government of the District of Columbia 1873
1882 Appropriations Act provided for one 9-member Board of Education, 3 members to be colored. Accounts controlled by DC Commissioner	J. Ormond Wilson 1872-1885	George F. T. Cook 1873 – 1900
	Edward A. Paul, Acting Superintendent April – June, 1885	
	William B. Powell 1885 – 1900	

1900 Reorganization Act – 7 members of the Board of Education, "2 were to be women, and 2 of the colored race"	Superintendent for all Schools	First Assistant Superintendent for the White Schools	First Assistant Superintendent for the Colored Schools
	Alexander Tait Stuart 1900 – 1906	Ida Gilbert Myers 1900 – 1906	Winfield Scott Montgomery 1900 – 1907
1906 Organic Law, Board of Education to be appointed by the Supreme Court consisting of 9 members, 3 to be women, with the Superintendent as executive officer. By custom 3 members were of the colored race. Expenditures were placed under control of the City Commissioners.	W.E. Chancellor 1906 – 1908	Percy M. Hughes 1906 – 1911	Roscoe Conklin Bruce 1907 – 1921
	Alexander Tait Stuart 1909 – 1911	"	"
	William M. Davidson 1911 – 1913	Ernest L. Thurston ? – 1914	"
	Ernest L. Thurston 1914 – 1920	Stephen E. Kramer 1914 – 1936	"

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	Superintendent for all Schools	First Assistant Superintendent for the White Schools	First Assistant Superintendent for the Colored Schools
	Frank W. Ballou 1920 – 1943	Robert Haycock 1936 – 1943	Garnet C. Wilkinson 1921 – 1951
	Robert L. Haycock 1943 – 1946	Carroll R. Reed 1941 - ?	"
	Hobart M. Corning 1946 – 1958		Harold A. Haynes 1951 - 1954

1954 Bolling v. Sharpe, companion ruling to Brown v. Board of Education desegregated schools	District of Columbia Public Schools integrated
1967 Hobson v. Hanson ruling that poor Black children were not receiving the same treatment as middle class Black and white children.	Carl Hansen 1958 – 1967
	Benjamin J. Henley, Acting Superintendent July – Nov, 1967
1969 School Board elected with 11 members	William R. Manning 1967 – 1969

Elected School Board with budget approved by City Council, Mayor, President and Congress.	District of Columbia Public Schools under an Elected Board of Education
	Benjamin J. Henley, Acting Superintendent 1969 – 1970
	Hugh J. Scott 1970 – 1973
	Floretta Dukes McKenzie, Acting Superintendent June 1973 – Sept, 1973
	Barbara Sizemore 1973 – 1975

Elected School Board with budget approved by City Council, Mayor, President and Congress.	District of Columbia Public Schools under an Elected Board of Education
	Vincent E. Reed 1975 – 1980
	James T. Guines, Acting Superintendent Jan, 1981 – June, 1981
	Floretta Dukes McKenzie 1981 – 1988
	Andrew E. Jenkins, III 1988 – 1990
	William H. Brown, Interim Superintendent Dec, 1990 – June, 1991
1994 Control Board appointed by Congress superceding the authority of the Mayor and City Council.	Franklin L. Smith 1991 – 1996
1996 Board of Education's authority suspended by the Control Board, which appoints Superintendent and Emergency Transitional Educational Board of Trustees.	Julius Becton 1996 - 1998
	Arlene Ackerman 1998 - present
2000 Board of Education Reorganized	

The poor students were taught reading, writing, grammar, arithmetic, and mathematics for their intended professions. Paying students received, in addition, instruction in geography and the Latin language (Wilson, p. 123). Private schools also existed for white students and a few colored students who could afford them.

The initial private schools for free colored students were founded by slaves who had been recently freed and by an Englishwoman (Hine, 1960, p. 43). The major setback of this period for colored students was the Snow Riots of 1835 when white crowds rioted and destroyed nearly all the colored schools. The schools were relocated and subsequently rebuilt (Hine, p. 48).

In 1852 Congress was presented with a "Memorial of the Trustees of the Public Schools of the City of Washington" signed by more than 8,000 citizens who asked that a school system be established. It stated:

> While so much has been done by Congress for popular education in the new States and Territories, and even in the District of Columbia, for higher institutions of learning, the COMMON SCHOOLS of the city, ... have received from the Government no aid whatever. (Board of Trustees, 1867, p. 16)

The issue passed unanimously in the Senate, but no action was taken in the House. Congress did not act until the Civil War when it used the District as an example of education for freed slaves.

1865 – 1900

An Act of Congress on May 21, 1862 required that 10% of all taxes to be collected from "persons of color" in the Cities of Washington and Georgetown were to be set apart for the purpose of initiating a system of primary schools for colored children. The law further provided that these funds would be controlled by the Boards of Trustees of the Public Schools. Fifty days later, however, another act was passed transferring the responsibilities for the schools for colored

children to a Board of Trustees appointed by the Secretary of the Department of Interior (Board of Trustees, 1867, p. 53).

Charges were made and public debate accompanied the legislation. The School Board denied that they had "declined to have anything to do with so distasteful a matter as the establishment of schools for colored children," as charged by the Association of Volunteer Teachers of Washington in 1864, explaining that the issue had not been brought to them. The Board explained.

> For the South, now that the blight of slavery has been removed, and the bondmen, heretofore prevented under cruel penalties from even learning how to read, have been elevated to the noble position of American citizens, it is evident that the duty of the hour, far exceeding any political plans, financial schemes, or commercial enterprises, to provide FREE SCHOOLS FOR ALL. (Board of Trustees, 1867, p. 4)

Superintendent Cook of the colored schools later reported that the "declination" of the Board of Trustees to initiate a primary system for colored children caused Congress, between May and July of 1862, to create a separate board to administer it (Board of Trustees, 1875, p. 29)

The issue resulting in the separate school system for colored children revolved around funding, with the Congress expecting the public schools systems to provide funds, while legislating that only taxation of colored persons and half the fine of someone who had broken an ordinance be set aside for schools. This amounted to $346.50 in total over a one year period, 1862-63 (Board of Trustees, 1867, p. 54). The total for the public schools of the City of Washington alone amounted to $60,051.26 over the three period, 1863-66 (Board of Trustees, 1867, p. 21).

Absolving itself of responsibility for the past years of not including colored students, the Board of Trustees cast blame on the City Councils for not having done anything and on Congress as being responsible for addressing the influx of colored students as a result of the war:

> Having the care and management of schools to which by law none but white children are admitted, the Trustees have not been called upon to consider the interests of the large portion of our community for which nothing had been done previous to the war; but they have noticed with approval the noble efforts of those who have devoted themselves to the education and advancement of the colored children in our midst. An excellent system of schools under competent teachers and able supervision has been established, mainly supported by contributions from the North, giving instruction to several thousand children.
>
> While it is the clear and undoubted duty of the National Government to maintain these schools for the thousands thrown among us by the results of the war, it is nevertheless believed that every consideration of justice and expediency should have impelled the City Councils of Washington to do something for the education of the colored children, independent of obligations imposed by laws of Congress. (Board of Trustees, 1867, p. 53)

The financing of the colored schools was resolved by an Act of Congress on June 25, 1864, ordering that the municipalities of the City of Washington, Georgetown and District of Columbia set aside the proportion of school funds to match the proportion of colored children in the school population. This act included compulsory education requirements. Congress, on July 23, 1866, required that the Cities of Washington and Georgetown turn over to the Trustees of the colored Schools the money, sites, buildings, improvements, furniture, and books owed to them by law (Board of Trustees, 1867, pp. 91-92). The County of Washington was also organized.

Of a total white population of 10,697 children, ages 5 – 18, in 1858, the public schools served 2,400 students. An additional 3,228 were in private schools, and 5,069 not in any school. By 1864, 3,780 of a total 12,869 were in the public schools (Board of Trustees, 1867, p. 18). As reported for July 1866, 6,552 pupils were in the private colored schools (Board of Trustees, 1867, p. 53).

The Board of Trustees consisted of three members from each district, totaling 12 members, all appointed by the mayor. The trustees in a complaint that still continues, ask to have direction over the budget:

> One of the changes, much needed, therefore, is to give the Board entire direction of the school expenditures, for if gentlemen are appointed to act as Trustees because of supposed fitness and the advantage derived from experience and practical acquaintance with the schools, then it is believed that they should have control of not only a part, but the whole of the funds expended for them. (Board of Trustees, 1867, p. 21)

The Trustees complained in that same report,

> The faithful discharge of the duties of a Trustee (The admission of scholars, visitation, charge of property, employment of teachers, &c.,[sic]) requires constant attention, much patience, untiring devotion, and great expenditure of time, and as this is without compensation, it becomes more and more difficult to obtain competent persons to fill the office. (p. 23)

> Something should speedily be done, therefore, to relieve the members of the Board from a part of their responsibilities and beside increasing the number of Trustees, the appointment of a SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS has become absolutely necessary. This recommendation is only reiterated from almost every previous report; but we trust it will no longer remain unheeded. (p. 24)

The first superintendent of the colored schools from 1865 – 1868 of the Cities of Washington and Georgetown was Alonzo E. Newton, a white man (Boyd's Washington and Georgetown Directory, 1866, p. 318) from Pennsylvania who came to the District under the auspices of the Freedman's Relief Association. He served again during the school year 1870-71.

The first colored superintendent of the colored schools was George F. T. Cook, who served an unequaled term of 31 years from 1868-70 and 1871-1900. Mr. Cook was the son of Rev. John F. Cook, an educator whose school was one of those destroyed in the Snow Riots (Hine, 1960, p. 60).

The first superintendent of the white schools in 1869 was Zalmon Richards. He had served as principal of academies in Massachusetts and New York and of what later became George Washington University. Although he was chosen for his "splendid scholarship, broad vision and constructive genius," he served only one year, 1869-70 (Hine, 1960, p. 57). Mr. Richards had attempted to introduce a new system of sound charts, a method of teacher

evaluation, and changes in other areas previously within the Board's authority. A Board subcommittee reported that a superintendent "should avoid rather than seek authority" (Tyack, 1974, p. 92). This is particularly ironic given the Board's earlier statement in 1867 that a superintendent was needed to relieve their responsibilities.

J. Ormond Wilson, who followed Mr. Richards in leading the white schools, expressed his philosophy for success in the superintendency:

> Its occupant does not embark for a pleasure voyage on a summer sea. . . He must not go too fast or too slow, too far to the right or too far to the left, lest he may fail to gain and hold the confidence and loyalty of the corps of teachers whom he is to lead, or the general approbation and support of the school board and the public, all of which are essential to his success. (Wilson, 1896, p. 149)

Mr. Wilson's advice may have been well taken for he was superintendent for 15 years, from 1870-1885.

By this time the number of students enrolled in public schools had increased, as shown in Table 1 (Board of Trustees, 1871, p. 49).

Table 1

Number and Percentage of all Children ages 6-17 Enrolled in School*

1870 – 71

District of Columbia	White		Colored	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
City of Washington	17,403	47.6%	8,532	52.7%
City of Georgetown	2,080	29.0%	796	60.0%
County, excepting the Cities	1,688	37.2%	1160	55.4%
TOTAL:	**21,117**	**44.9%**	**10,494**	**53.6%**

*The percentages are correct. The numbers may be inaccurate due to the small print and illegibility of the original.

Mr. Wilson became Superintendent of the City of Washington in 1870-71. During 1871-72, he served as Superintendent of both the city of Washington and the City of Georgetown, and in 1872 replaced Benjamin Davis as Superintendent of the County schools. He now reported to

three boards of trustees. However, in an act of Congress in 1874, the four boards were consolidated into one board of 19 trustees. Fourteen (14) were white, and five colored. Mr. Wilson had responsibility for the white students and Mr. Cook for the colored students in the Cities of Washington and Georgetown. The white and colored students of the County of Washington were the responsibility of Mr. Wilson (Board of Trustees, 1874, pp. 45-47).

The superintendents and the Board of Trustees repeatedly tried to convince Congress to provide some financial support to the public schools. Mr. Wilson stressed the unique situation of the District of Columbia and cited the financial disadvantages of being the seat of the National Government:

> (1) advantages given to states and territories other than the District through such things as land grants,
>
> (2) the large numbers of "wards of the nation";" i.e. freed slaves who came to Washington as a result of the war,
>
> (3) the full third of the school population whose parents worked for the National Government or Congress and did not pay taxes, and
>
> (4) the fact that half of the property in the District was owned by the National government and thus not taxable. (Wilson, 1896, p. 137)

The few donations made by Congress of

> ...permission to occupy temporarily three or four vacant public lots or parts of public reservations, the gift in fee of the old Jefferson stable, the use of the old Union and Anacostia engine-houses and the site of the Force school so long as they shall be occupied for school purposes, the gift of an old frame building (a relic of the war) ... and on one or two occasions the advance of a sum from the United States Treasury to pay salaries of teachers in arrears, with a proviso for its repayment ... (Wilson, 1896, pp. 137-138)

Mr. Wilson called "a beggarly list of old clothes and small loans for short periods—" (Wilson, 1896, pp. 137-138).

This is a consistent pattern of Congress failing to provide adequate support to the District, even while it denied the District a sufficient tax base to generate its own revenues. Mr. Wilson

had complained that Washington had a heavier school tax than any other city (Board of Trustees, 1871, p. 531), and in 1873 only 26.8% of the pupils had parents who were taxpayers (Board of Trustees, 1873, p.64). Finally, when the city was greatly indebted, Congress intervened.

Wilson's statement, above, continued:

> — until we come down to 1878, when the Congress assumed the payment of one-half of all the expenses of the District of Columbia, including those of the public schools. The District was then so heavily involved in debt that the public schools did not receive the full benefit of this national aid until after the close of the period of which I am writing [1885]. (Wilson, 1896, pp. 137-138)

Mr. Wilson's relationship with the Board appeared to be pleasant, in part encouraged by his lavish praise. In his Annual Report of 1870-71, he states:

> I met with a Board of Trustees solicitous for the improvement of the schools, and throughout the entire year received from the members, each and all, valuable advice, friendly cooperation and constant support.
>
> The amount of time given, the personal inconveniences submitted to and the ability and zeal displayed in discharging onerous duties by the Board of Trustees ... have been without a parallel so far as my knowledge extends. (1871, pp. 17, 33)

However, by January 1885, things were not going so smoothly with the Board of Trustees. On the 12th, General Birney, a member of the Committee on Annual Reports, required the superintendents to prepare a consolidated report since 1879-80, and to omit all the arguments, eulogies, and uninstructive matter. It was to not exceed 120 pages, including tabular statements showing the number of children in grade of each age represented in that grade, omitting many other items, "and, in short, all matter, the only use of which is to 'pad' what ought to be a short report of useful matter into a large volume (Board of Trustees, 1885, p. 37). These instructions were given even though neither Superintendent Cook nor Wilson had included general descriptions of conditions or recommendations since 1877-79.

On January 13, General Birney cited many facts condemning the curriculum, homework, written examinations and percentage marking. In a meeting of the Board on February 10, the Committee on Teachers and others took General Birney's assertions one by one and gave evidence to refute the charges stating that each was not true (Board of Trustees, 1885).

On April 4, 1885, Mr. Wilson submitted his resignation (Wilson, 1896, p. 79). The response of the Board, considering the many years of Mr. Wilson's service, was cordial at best:

> Among the many causes that have contributed to the growth and prosperity of the Public Schools of the District, your labors and long connection with the same must be recognized as having been greatly conducive to those results. Very respectively, William Tindall, Secretary. (p. 79)

At their April 14 meeting, with a warmer sentiment, the Board passed a resolution expressing their "unalloyed regret," and that he is "the educator and public servant whom this community is indebted more than to any other individual." This vote was unanimous, with General Birney having been excused from voting. By April 20, General Birney withdrew his preamble and resolutions relating to examinations and the multiplicity of studies (Board of Trustees, 1885, p. 83-84).

Following this contentious period initiated by the Board of Trustees, their powers were taken over by the District Commissioners:

> This organic act [1858] placed the schools under the independent administration of the board of trustees ... down to 1885, when, contrary to all American precedents and unfortunately for the schools, the District Commissioners arrogated to themselves all the powers and duties pertaining to the management of the schools and reduced the legal functions of a school trustee to those of a subordinate whose sole business it is to execute the orders of his superior. (Wilson, 1896, p. 133)

Through his term in office, Superintendent Wilson commented positively about the teachers in the school system. The first quotation is taken from his first year in office, and the latter from his article written in 1896:

> I cannot take leave of this subject without expressing my appreciation of the very satisfactory manner in which the teachers of this city have performed their difficult and laborious tasks, and my acknowledgement for their uniform courtesy and cooperation. (Board of Trustees, 1871, p. 30)

> In conclusion, if you ask me what was the most important factor of all in this work, I answer unhesitatingly, the corps of teachers – intelligent, progressive, faithful to duty and loyal to their leaders. (Wilson, 1896, p. 170)

Following the retirement of Mr. Wilson on June 2, the Office of Commissioners announced the appointment of Edward A. Paul, who had been serving temporarily. Two days later, the order was revoked as Mr. Paul declined the appointment, and William B. Powell was appointed in his stead (Board of Trustees, 1885, p. 106).

Mr. Powell had served as superintendent in Illinois for 24 years prior to coming to the District. His long tenure, which was to last from 1885 to 1900, along with the tenures of J. Ormond Wilson and George F. T. Cook, were all the more unusual considering this observation from Tyack: "During the latter half of the nineteenth century, ... for the most part the job was a brief way-station; the average tenure of office in Los Angeles and San Francisco was two years; Omaha, Buffalo, Rochester and Milwaukee, three; Cincinnati and Indianapolis, five (Tyack, 1974, p. 96).

Mr. Powell was spoken well of as a superintendent, and the cause for his leaving, as well as the departure of Mr. Cook in 1900 appears to be caught up in a larger dispute over the school system. Similar to the demands of 1885, the Board of Trustees in a meeting on January 9, 1900, resolved:

> that the Superintendents ... are hereby requested to furnish at the next meeting of the Board of Trustees, a report of the numbers of meetings held with their supervisors, the number of grade meetings personally conducted, ... during the year ending June 23, 1899. (Board of Trustees, 1900, p. 85)

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The report submitted by Mr. Powell noted that records had not been kept, but provided his best reconstruction of events. Mr. Cook also lacked records but he reported meeting individually with the supervisors, involving approximately 120 meetings, with 103 other meetings conducted by his supervising principals, and with the teachers he had met once (Board of Trustees, 1900, pp. 91-92).

At its meeting on February 20, the Board adopted a resolution,

> Whereas, in the investigation of the Superintendent of Schools of the ninth, tenth, and eleventh divisions [the colored divisions] of the Board finds much inefficiency in the neglect by the incumbent of the work pertaining to the strictly educational features of that office: Resolved ... that a change be made in the office ... and ... appoint to it a man who will bring it to the position all that it stands for from an educational standpoint. (Board of Trustees, 1900, p. 97)

The Board's resolution is the more surprising in that the colored high schools were highly regarded because the leading colored intellectuals of the day were teaching there. From a national perspective, resources for colored schools were about the same in 1900 as they had been in 1875, and declined in relation to white schools until 1930. High schools for colored students developed more slowly, and were slower than white schools to meet accreditation standards. The exception was the M Street high school in Washington, D.C. (Button & Provenzo, 1983, pp. 250, 303). While Washington D.C. had a high school and a normal school to train teachers for colored students before it did white students, the colored students had to contend with smaller older schools built for other purposes.

In 1900 the Senate had authorized an inquiry into the public schools. Their criticisms had concerned the supply of textbooks, the need for more active drill in elementary school, and having white and colored schools under one superintendent (Board of Education, 1902, p. 13). None of these was cited as the cause for Mr. Cook's dismissal.

The Board of Trustees was obviously intent on dismissing Mr. Cook. However, in 1900 they were supplanted by a new Board of Education in the Reorganization Act of 1900. The Trustees may have been trying to save their own positions by making Mr. Cook a scapegoat. The whole system must have been culpable considering the Senate action which usurped the Board's authority, similar to the events of 1885.

At its final meeting, the Board of Trustees endorsed the explanations given by Mr. Powell in response to the Senate criticism. The reaction of the press was that

> The public impression that a change of both theory and administration is needed has not been diminished by the attempted defense of methods which were condemned by Congress. ... The school system of late in vogue in the District has been convicted of insufficiency in the public mind. It has shown to lack harmony, to be devoid of the essentials of education, to run to extremes, to produce bad results. ("Its final meeting, District Board of Trustees adjourns sine die," 1900)

Mr. Powell withdrew from service at this time.

1900 – 1954

In 1900 the Reorganization Act established seven members of the Board of Education to be appointed by the Commissioners, with stipulation that "two were women, and two were of the colored race" (Haycock, 1946, p. 45). The school system now had one superintendent, with two assistant superintendents: one for Divisions 1-9, the white schools, and one for Divisions 10 – 13, the colored schools. The act provided that, "The colored assistant superintendent under the direction of the superintendent of schools shall have sole charge of all teachers, classes and schools in which colored children are taught." The superintendent and board were to act on all changes in personnel on the recommendation of the colored assistant superintendent (Haycock, 1946, p. 50).

Winfield Scott Montgomery was selected as assistant superintendent for the colored schools. He had been born a slave in Mississippi and had become a medical doctor, but chose a career in education.

Ida Gilbert Myers became assistant superintendent for the white schools. She had served as principal of the normal school which prepared the white teachers.

Alexander Tait Stuart, who had been a teacher, principal and supervisor in the school system, was selected as superintendent. Mr. Stuart echoed J. Ormond Wilson in his respect for teachers and gratitude to the Board of Education. In the Report of 1900-1901, he declares:

> The teacher is closer to the real life of the child than any else excepting the parent, and for this reason, her knowledge of the child's mental aptitudes, growth, physical endurance and moral qualities necessarily surpasses that of anyone else. (Board of Trustees, 1902, p. 68)

To the Board he explains,

> I beg to express the Board of Education my profound gratitude for the confidence and support it has given me in all its official acts. Besides this, I am grateful for the personal kindnesses received from each of its members. (p. 78)

During Mr. Stuart's first tenure from 1900 to 1906, Congress passed the Organic Act of 1906. It provided for nine members of the Board of Education, of which three were to be women and, in practice, three were 'of the colored race" (Government of the District of Columbia, 1939).

The act also provided that the Board of Education be appointed by the Justices of the Supreme Court, rather than the District Commissioners, who maintained control of fiscal matters. Legislative and regulatory authority were exercised by the Board of Education, the District Commissioners, and the Congress (Haycock, 1946, pp. 49-50). Congress continued to make adjustments, and by 1919, had amended their original act 12 times (Hine, 1960, p. 40).

One problem was in the system whereby the Board of Education would submit their needs for additional schools to the Commissioners. Because those requests were part of the Commissioners' total budget package to be submitted to the Congress within a spending limitation, the Commissioners would not make all the school requests known to Congress. The lack of schools and failure to meet growing needs had allowed a backlog of inadequate facilities to develop. The superintendent estimated that it would take $2,000,000 per year for five years to build a sufficient number of schools (Hine, 1960, p. 44).

Shortly following passage of the Organic Act, William E. Chancellor was appointed superintendent. He had written books on school administration in 1904 and 1908 and portrayed the city school superintendent primarily as a business manager (Button and Provenzo, 1983, p. 226).

During this time the Reynolds Report was prepared to address one concern of the President of the United States, the need for manual training for students. The report stated that studies in "literary or semi-literary" courses did not provide students with the necessary skill nor pride in their most probable future employment in the trades or labor (Board of Education, 1908, p. 10). According to the Annual Report, Dr. Chancellor disputed some of the points of the Reynolds Report, albeit in a courteous manner (Board of Education, 1908, pp. 21-23). Mr. Haycock, who was superintendent from 1943 to 1946, described his predecessor:

> Dr. Chancellor's administration was destined to be of short duration. A man of ultra-progressive ideas and broad intelligence, apparently gifted in the field of educational theory, he failed as a school administrator. Now aware that the wheels of school machinery turn comparatively slowly in Washington, Dr. Chancellor did not learn from the beginning how to "make haste slowly" in dealing with the Commissioners and the Congress. Thus thwarted with many of his plans, serious bickerings began, and, making the mistake of carrying his troubles to the public by daily attacks published freely in the newspapers, Dr. Chancellor was soon beyond his depth in a sea of troubles. He was practically forced to withdraw.... (1946, p. 56)

Approximately seventy years later, a local newspaper cited Dr. Chancellor's experiences drawing close parallel with those of Superintendent Barbara Sizemore. The article noted that

> Mr. Chancellor took office at the beginning of a new dispensation in the progress of the schools ... under the Organic Act of 1906.... Chancellor's confrontative and caustic approach in dealing with the board and other city officials created an atmosphere of mistrust and hostility.... Chancellor was found guilty on ten of the 14 charges against him, including incompetency and inefficiency, loss of influence, antagonism and loss of confidence of the Board of Education, etc. The Board voted to fire him on January 4, 1908. ("Sizemore isn't the first: school chief fired in'08", 1975)

With the dismissal of Mr. Chancellor, Mr. Stuart was again called upon to be superintendent, in which position he served until 1911. In his last Annual Report he was concerned that students had to raise money to pay for playgrounds, that schools were not named after noteworthy educators, and that the District of Columbia costs were seen as excessive. He concurred with the findings of the Schoolhouse Commission, noting that:

- the District had fallen behind in the construction of new buildings,
- the dual school system for colored and white children was adding greatly to school expenses,
- fluctuations of population caused by accommodating children of members of Congress only during a few winter months and educating non-resident students were costly, and
- it was difficult to establish the 124 half-day schools and replace the 18 portable schools and 96 rented rooms. (Board of Education, 1913, pp. 32-33)

He maintained his pleasant attitude toward the Board, explaining,

> I cannot close this report, which marks the termination of my work as superintendent ... without an expression of thanks for the cordial support and cooperation accorded me officially by your board and the many evidences of confidence and regard I have received from the individual board members thereof. (Board of Education, 1913, p. 49)

The assistant superintendent for the white divisions, Mrs. Myers, retired in 1906, to be replaced by Percy M. Hughes. Mr. Hughes had been a high school principal, and he served as

assistant superintendent until 1911 when he accepted a superintendent position in Syracuse (Hine, 1960, pp. 64-5).

In 1907, while Dr. Chancellor was superintendent, Dr. Montgomery continued in the school system but relinquished his office as assistant superintendent to a Harvard graduate, Roscoe Conkling Bruce. Mr. Bruce continued the tradition of expressing gratitude to the Board:

> In conclusion, I beg to acknowledge with gratitude the many kindnesses and courtesies and above all the confidence I have received from my colleagues in the colored schools, from janitor to supervising principal, from you, my dear Mr. Stuart; from members of the Board of Education, and in particular from the President, James O. Oyster. (Board of Education, 1911, p. 131)

In 1911, Mr. Stuart informed the Board that he wished to step down. (Board of Education, 1913). He again returned to the position of director of intermediate education. His replacement was William M. Davidson who had been recruited from a superintendent position in Omaha, Nebraska. Two and one-half years later, Pittsburgh was able to attract him with an offer of higher pay (Haycock, 1946, p. 61).

The new superintendent was Ernest L. Thurston who had served as teacher, director of the business department in the business high school, supervising principal and assistant superintendent. Replacing him as assistant superintendent for the white divisions was Stephen E. Kramer, who had risen through the school system and also lectured at George Washington University. He was well regarded. Mr. Kramer would serve as assistant superintendent until 1936 (Hine, 1960, p. 65).

Mr. Thurston served during the years of World War I when many staff members left for government service, and supplies were short. He reportedly made innovations with extreme caution. (Hine, 1960, p. 63) Apparently, in 1920 the Board did not renew his contract, for an article in the newspaper reported: "The impossibility of the board electing a Washington man

became obvious when strong public sentiment was aroused for the retention of Superintendent Thurston ("ref, Board of Education", 1920).

Facing Superintendent Thurston had been a problem concerning Mr. Bruce, assistant superintendent for the Negro schools. The Parents' League, made up of six to seven hundred Negro parents accused Mr. Bruce of favoritism concerning teachers and not forseeing and preventing an indiscretion of a Dutch anthropologist in the schools. Negro women picketed the school board at each of its meetings for weeks because of its refusal to remove Mr. Bruce. (Green, 1967, p. 189)

The person selected to succeed the superintendent was Frank W. Ballou, another Harvard graduate, who was serving as an assistant superintendent in Boston. He had to overcome some community resistance following two popular local superintendents, Mr. Stuart and Mr. Thurston. His success was apparent since he remained in the position until 1943 (Haycock, 1946, pp. 65-66). Mr. Hine, in his history of the school system, commented:

> Of the problems confronting him Dr. Ballou was fully aware. In an annual report he remarked that superintendents of other cities regarded Washington as one of the most difficult in the United States. Some of the well-informed local citizens confirmed this opinion. (Hine, 1960, p. 41)

The school system by 1920 was in great need of additional school buildings and classrooms. In 1921 Congress appropriated an additional $2,000,000 for construction, but this only covered about one-fifth of the construction needed. Schools which were too old and should have been abandoned continued to be used (Hine, 1960, p. 43).

Similar to Mr. Wilson, Dr. Ballou used Annual Reports to acknowledge the press, school employees, the Board of Education, Members of the House and Senate, Appropriations Committee and all others (Board of Education, 1921).

Garnet C. Wilkinson, who had been a teacher, principal, and assistant superintendent, in 1921 was appointed first assistant superintendent for colored schools and would remain in that position until 1951. Beginning with the Annual Report of 1920-21, a separate report of the assistant superintendent of the colored schools was no longer included. Through the first decades of the twentieth century, relative level of support for the Negro schools declined. In the 1930's, the high school teachers of Division II, continued to be nationally-recognized Negro intellectuals, in contrast to most northern cities which had few Negro teachers (Button and Provenzo, 1983, pp. 250, 303).

A study of Negro education reported:

> It is well to point to the existence, in at least one community of what has here been designated as the South, of a much more equitable program of public education for Negroes than is generally found where there are separate schools. The public schools of the District of Columbia, unique in their direct control by the Federal Government, are illustrative of policies and practices which might well be emulated by other communities with segregated schools. Two basic principles—first, participation in determining the policies of schools and general school administration and, second, equality of educational opportunity for children—serve as conscious guides for the direction of Negro education in Washington....
>
> In general, in accord with legislative enactments, appropriations for the improvement and expansion of physical plan are divided proportionately between white and Negro schools. ... Probably no dual system of school in the Nation has quite the degree of equality between the races as that of the District of Columbia.
>
> It is not intended here to give the impression that there are no inequalities in the educational facilities provided for the white and Negro populations in the District of Columbia. There are some racial disparities. For example, though the pupil-loads of white and Negro teachers were reported as being practically identical in 1935-36, the analysis of comparative data for the 15-year period ending in 1936-37 reveals that, in general, and particularly in elementary and vocational schools, Negro teachers have had larger pupil-teacher loads than white teachers. Further there have been occasional lapses from a proportionate division of funds for capital replacements outlay. There may be – in fact, there are alleged to be – other significant racial inequalities. Even so, the policies and practices which characterize the conduct of public education for Negroes in the District of Columbia are more nearly equitable than those which obtain in most other dual systems of schools. (Wilkerson, 1939, pp. 155-157)

In 1943, Mr. Ballou retired due to ill health. He was succeeded by Robert L. Haycock who had served in the school system as teacher, principal, supervising principal and assistant superintendent since 1895. He retired in 1946.

Hobart M. Corning, who replaced Mr. Haycock, would serve through the major period of school integration. As reported in the textbook, City of Magnificent Intentions, currently used to teach D.C. History in the school system (Associates for Renewal in Education [ARE], 1983), in 1946 Dr. Corning declared the "Washington school system is obsolete, overcrowded, undermanned, and underpaid...." In December of 1947 the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) supported Negro parents in keeping their children home to protest old buildings. This prompted Congress to commission the Strayer Report. The report found good teachers, but the school system for the Negro students was much inferior, with less funding, fewer buildings and not enough teachers (ARE, p. 474). The textbook relates:

> The schools had become completely unbalanced. As white families left the District in the postwar years, white schools steadily lost students, while schools for Black students became overcrowded.... Not a single school had been built for Black students since the war. Superintendent Corning promised to do his best. Garnet Wilkinson, assistant superintendent for colored schools, called for patience. (p. 474)

World War II had made its impact, and the parents of Divisions 10-13 were insisting on more and better schools, supplies, access to parks and swimming pools, and other community services in the schools. Their cause was buttressed by the increasing number of Negro students, many of whom were moving north. The minutes of the Board of Trustees are replete with Division 1-9 community concerns that their schools not be transferred to Divisions 10- 13 (Charles Sumner School Museum, 'Superintendents').

Beginning in 1951, Mr. Corning's assistant for colored schools was Harold A. Haynes who served his career in the school system rising from teacher to principal to assistant superintendent.

1954 - 2000

In September, 1950, eleven Negro youngsters attempted to enroll in a brand new, well equipped, yet half-filled junior high school designated for white students. Suit was brought on behalf of one 12-year-old, Spottswood T. Bolling, against the School Board president, Melvin Sharpe. The Supreme Court, which was adjudicating Brown v. Board of Education, attached Bolling v. Sharpe to its proceedings and ruled that the "Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal." The schools in Washington were ordered to integrate and did so fairly smoothly (ARE, p. 475-476).

With integration, the position of assistant superintendent of the colored schools no longer existed, and Dr. Haynes continued as deputy superintendent for coordinated services. He frequently testified before the Board of Education, presumably to report, among other responsibilities, on the Negro schools (Charles Sumner School Museum, "Superintendents"). The segregation had had one advantage: Negro educators were more able to rise to the highest positions of leadership, short of the superintendent.

Mr. Corning continued to serve as superintendent until 1958 at which time he retired. The new superintendent was Carl Hansen from Nebraska, who had joined the school system in 1947 as an assistant to the superintendent. During Dr. Hansen's tenure, Washington became resegregated as white families continued to move out of the District or sent their children to private schools, and enrollment became 91% Negro.

White flight to the suburbs accelerated with the Court's decision. And, although the transition had been smooth, a system was established whereby students at different achievement levels were placed in different tracks and instructed separately. This tracking allowed white and more affluent Negro families to remain apart from the lower achieving, poorer and predominantly Negro students.

At this time, the District was still governed by a three-person commission. President Kennedy appointed the first Negro Commissioner, and in 1967 President Johnson appointed the first Negro Commissioner-Mayor with a City Council, also appointed.

A suit, brought by Julius Hobson against Superintendent Hansen in 1967, resulted in a ruling by Judge J. Skelly Wright that Black students were not receiving the same treatment at white children. He required equalized spending, ordered busing to relieve overcrowded Black schools, and eliminated the track system which prepared bright students for college and less academic students for vocational trades.

In June of 1967, the Board of Education, which was still appointed by Federal judges, shifted to a five to four member Black majority (Sizemore, 1981, p. 20). Dr. Hansen believed in the track system; he felt that busing violated the concept of neighborhood schools. When the Board of Education would not allow him to appeal the decision, he retired in protest. ("Danger facing nation's schools?", 1967)

Benjamin J. Henley, who was Black, became acting superintendent during the interim while the new superintendent was selected. He had attended schools in Washington, D.C., and served as teacher, principal, program director, and assistant superintendent.

The search for a superintendent in 1967 resulted in the hiring of William R. Manning, a white superintendent in Michigan. He remained in office only 19 months when the Board of

Education voted, 10 to one, to relieve him of his duties. Board members complained that he was an ineffectual administrator. The cause may have been just as attributable to historical events.

In 1968, during Manning's tenure, Congress gave the city the first measure of home rule through an elected school board. In response to citizen concerns for Home Rule in the District, the first public elections were authorized in 1968, but only for the Board of Education. The eleven school board members reflected, and continue to reflect, the racial mix of the city. From that point on, all superintendents selected by the Board have been Black. The Board had limited power since the budget still had to be passed by the appointed Mayor and City Council, forwarded by the President of the United States to the Congress, where the District Committees made the final decisions. The Board of Education became a forum and stepping stone for political recognition (ARE, 1981, p. 511). The new Board configuration called for its own superintendent, resulting in Mr. Manning's dismissal, as also occurred to William Powell in 1900.

Mr. Henley served as acting superintendent a second time from 1969-1970, and could have been appointed to the position, but he explained that he did not want the post. He felt that "the school system has many problems, and it will take some time to correct these problems and affect the changes that are necessary, and this amount of time is longer than I possibly will be with the system." Several of the board members suggested that an outsider be selected to assure that the superintendent would not have any ties with the present school system operations and would be able to make any sweeping changes, as necessary" ("Henley takes self out of running for superintendent", 1970).

The superintendent they selected was Hugh J. Scott, who was an assistant superintendent in Detroit. The major difficulty faced by Dr. Scott was the Board-recommended Academic

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Achievement Plan. That plan called for the heterogeneous grouping of children and teacher accountability for test scores among other issues. Dr. Scott, in contrast, recommended limiting classrooms to test score differences of no more than one grade level. Dr. Scott's recommendation was taken by the community as a reimposition of tracking ("Scott plan faces trouble", 1971).

Dr. Scott also opposed the Academic Achievement Plan by siding with teachers against the reward system based on test scores. His problems with the School Board surfaced within his first year of service when a Board member who had supported his selection released a letter criticizing Dr. Scott for failing to provide "leadership and movement for change" and suggested that he be fired. Dr. Scott decided to quit at the expiration of his three year contract ("Scott will go with 'relief and regret'", 1973).

In 1971, another suit was brought before Judge Wright by Mr. Hobson. The judge declared that educational services were not equally distributed between the poor Black students east of Rock Creek Park and middle class Black and white communities west of the park. Salaries were ordered to be equalized across the city and teachers were shifted each fall to achieve "equalization". This continued until 1977 when the Judge ordered classes equalized based on enrollment rather than teachers' salaries.

Dr. Scott's approach to the Board and other school staff did not project the grateful, laudatory attitudes expressed by some of his predecessors with the long tenure, such as Superintendents Powell, Cook, Bruce and Stuart. In fact within 120 days of being in office, Dr. Scott declared that Washington's public schools were "among the worst in the nation ("Scott will go with 'relief and regret'", 1973). He had also implied that he did not feel that he could rely on his administrative staff ("Scott: D.C. School chief is in trouble", 1971).

During the period of searching for a new superintendent, June – September, 1973, Floretta Dukes McKenzie served as acting superintendent. She only remained a short time in the school system after the appointment of Barbara Sizemore from Chicago.

Mrs. Sizemore assumed the superintendency in October, 1973. A year later in a newspaper article she explained,

> A change agent expects resistance and opposition. You don't give up and you don't get scared either. You do what is necessary to bring about change and you take the consequences. For the first year I was just talking about change, and there was no problem. When you start doing it, different kinds of things come out of the woodwork. ("D.C. Schools: War of words, memos", 1974)

This article goes on to report that at one time or another in the past year, most members of the board have opposed Mrs. Sizemore on an issue and when they have, they say, they feel that they have been attacked personally in return.

The District of Columbia Self-Government and Governmental Reorganization Act of 1974, known as the Home Rule Act, established the elected positions of Mayor and City Council. The elections were held. While citizens of the District now had greater control over their affairs, all appropriations still had to be sent for approval through the President to the Congress.

Having two elected bodies set up a pattern where political aspirants would first run for the School Board as a steppingstone to the City Council. With the School Board responsible for educating students, but the City Council for building schools and appropriating funds, a struggle developed with each elected body complaining about the other.

Mrs. Sizemore remained in office until she was fired in October, 1975. It appears that her difficulties with the Board stemmed from (1) her style, reflected in initial comments as "'brilliant', 'creative' and 'charismatic'" and two years later as, "'combative', 'volatile' and 'hostile"; and (2) management difficulties illustrated by failure to prepare required financial

statements, and hiring 430 more teachers than had been authorized ("Sizemore scrap", 1975). A later newspaper article reported "In D.C., her independent, sometimes abrasive administrative style generated friction between herself and some members of the school board, who branded her as an inept administrator" ("School job in Michigan is offered to Sizemore", 1978).

Reminiscent of the firing of Mr. Chancellor in 1908, Mrs. Sizemore also required a trial or hearing. The charges of poor administration brought against her sounded strikingly familiar: "She failed to provide a plan for equalization of school resources, didn't submit annual reports on time, lagged in selecting regional superintendents and filling other posts, and in other ways poorly administered the school system" ("Offer to quit is withdrawn by Sizemore", 1975).

The day that the Board voted, seven to four, to fire Mrs. Sizemore, they voted unanimously to name Vincent E. Reed acting superintendent, even though the four person minority had not been consulted. Mr. Reed had been a teacher, principal and assistant superintendent in the school system. On accepting the office he explained that he expected to be able to work out any differences of opinion with the Board, and that it makes the final decision. He concluded, however, "If I get to the point where I can't follow them, I will quit" ("Reed named to fill in as acting school chief", 1975).

After 16 months on the job, the Board issued a letter commending Mr. Reed stating,

> Reed and his staff have performed in an exemplary manner during the first sixteen months, .. the atmosphere of mutual respect and trust evidenced members of the Board of Education and yourself ... and the relationship between you and your staff has been welcomed by the Washington, D.C. community. ("Reed gets letter of praise from board", 1977)

In 1977, his popularity is credited with swaying the election towards candidates who supported him. All four incumbents who were reelected and two of the three new candidates who aligned with him won ("A vote of confidence on Supt. Reed", 1977).

The school system was entering a more political arena. In March 1979, a strike was called by the teachers' union which was working toward becoming a political power in the City. It backed Mayor Marion Barry, who supported specific candidates in the School Board elections. In July, the City Council established a task force on public education and convened hearings which the School Board boycotted. The Board was concerned with the Council moving politically into their area of authority. A City Council member commented, "Schools are becoming a political issue that the school board and superintendent can't control anymore" ("Schools ÷ politics = problems", 1979).

One proposal by Mr. Reed, to establish an academic high school, by 1980 had been defeated twice by the Board. The opposing members and much of the community felt that it was elitist and would remove the best students from other high schools in the city. Arguments on the Board were acrimonious, and one of the school's supporters felt that the vote was 'very personal and racist: people opposed the high school because they perceived it as something supported by white residents." The strong political positions taken by the Board may have been caused by their political aspirations to be elected to the City Council. "On a school board with a notorious history as the District of Columbia's most potent political spring-board—Mayor Barry was school board president until 1974—maneuvers for power, influence and a spot in the limelight, say some school board members, have reached a fevered pitch" (D.C. school chief Reed will resign", 1980).

Explaining, "I just don't think I can do the job under these circumstances with this kind of Board of Education," Mr. Reed resigned ("Board v. Reed", 1980). The Academic High School was established after he left. His difficulties with the Board are reminiscent of those faced by Mr. Wilson in dealing with the Board and member, General Birney. In announcing his

departure, Mr. Reed said it was "prompted primarily by personal antagonism and feuding with some board members who he said had taken from him the day-to-day operation of the school system." He also specifically mentioned that one Board member had been "devious and demagogic" over the years and had given "inhumane treatment" to himself and his staff ("Reed insists he'll retire on December 31", 1980).

That January, as the Board members contended to select a new president, one commented that "he would like to clean up the board's image as a group of individuals more interested in bickering than in legitimate debate, in personal vendettas than in policy-making" ("Reed's shadow sure to loom over school board election", 1980).

James T. Guines, the associate superintendent for instructional services, who originally came from Richmond, Virginia, became acting superintendent during the period of the search for a superintendent. Dr. Guines was seen as a "colorful, outspoken man" with a reputation for being good with educational theory and planning ("Guines named acting District Schools chief", 1980). Although he initially professed that he was not interested in the position, he actively sought the appointment. In deciding not to appoint him, the Board cited his wavering on issues and making remarks too quickly. One Board member felt that he did a good job managing the school system in the interim ("Guines' ready tongue earned disapproval of school board", 1981).

The Board selected instead Floretta Dukes McKenzie, who returned to the school system from working as a deputy assistant secretary for the U.S. Department of Education, and she remained through 1988. When she was appointed, she was asked about the Board's history of conflicts with superintendents. She replied, "Yes, I had to give some consideration to the possibility of a short tenure." She reportedly broke into a wide grin, and everyone, board members and audience, laughed with her ("4 school board members praise new sup't", 1981).

The school system under Dr. McKenzie endured fewer confrontations. In 1983 parents had become more interested in and shown more enthusiasm for the education and the school system ("Changing role of school superintendents makes job chancy", 1983). Elections that year turned on whether the candidates supported her or not ("Candidates all go with McKenzie in school board race", 1983).

In all, it was a calmer time on the School Board with Marion Barry as the mayor, and Dr. McKenzie as superintendent. With popular support, school budgets were increased, and she was able to add $2.5 million in private sector support ("Home-grown answers in a Black school system", 1983). Issues, such as management, special education, and textbooks, received more attention by the Board, which now could move to focusing on its goal: "to build an outstanding and superior school system" ("D.C. School board, once a political arena, graduates to issues", 1985).

Dr. McKenzie resigned after six years to establish a new consulting firm. She had been described as "a cautious, methodical administrator, McKenzie projects a calm, folksy image in public; although in private, school officials said, she is often blunt and an unabashed workaholic" ("McKenzie resigns to form consulting firm", 1987).

Her successor in 1988 was the deputy superintendent, Andrew E. Jenkins, III. During his tenure, a community organization, Committee on Public Education (COPE), conducted an in-depth study of the school system. The results of their report served as a guideline for changes demanded of superintendents over the next decade. Thus Dr. Jenkins faced pressures similar to Mr. Stuart and Dr. Scott of having to change the system in response to an outside study; although Dr. Jenkins attempted to make the required adjustments in contrast to Dr. Scott who opposed them. Those adjustments included management, administrative staff size, budget and

educational concerns. In addition, a separate management audit determined that at least 400 administrator positions should be eliminated, among other recommendations. In trying to comply, one Board member commented, "Dr. Jenkins is standing on a banana peel, cutting back will be very tough ("D.C. School bureaucracy gobbling too many resources, study says", 1989).

By early 1990, Dr. Jenkins announced that seven additional top aides would be reassigned or dismissed. Some board members had encouraged him to make the staff changes, but others observed that the shifts showed that he could not retain a strong team. One Board member noted, "This is typical of the scenario he's facing. He's damned if he does, damned if he doesn't." Board members had been complaining for months about how his staff handled responsibilities, and COPE was concerned about progress on its reform agenda ("7 top D.C. school aides affected by latest shift", 1990).

With growing dissatisfaction, the Board voted to fire him on November 30, 1990. They had intended to dismiss him in a meeting in July, but relented in the face of Dr. Jenkins' vocal supporters and the television cameras. However, in the November elections, candidates supporting him did not do well, and the majority of Board members were now ready to vote for his dismissal ("D.C. School Board again moving for Jenkins' dismissal, 1990).

Dr. Jenkins felt that he lost his job because of his desire to introduce an Afrocentric curriculum. His now raucous supporters saw him as a martyr to that cause and protested loudly during the Board meeting as he was dismissed ("D.C. School chief fired amid chaotic protest", 1990).

His deputy superintendent, William H. Brown, who had also spent his career with the school system, served as interim superintendent. The Board president commented that, "Dr. Brown came in difficult times and he was able to provide some stability and keep people focused

on the task of educating children" ("D.C. School chief's bonus irks parents", 1991). When asked why he did not more aggressively seek the superintendent appointment, he explained, "Because the things that needed to be changed, I wasn't going to be able to change" (personal communication, July, 1991). His statement is similar to the comments of Mr. Henley, who was also regarded as a capable administrator and demurred from accepting the position.

The Board of Education was seeking someone from outside the school system to serve as a change agent to implement reforms and, in 1991, selected Franklin L. Smith from Dayton, Ohio. Dr. Smith had a charismatic personality and maintained a strong relationship to the majority faction of the Board of Education. Dr. Smith had the unenviable position of overseeing implementation of the COPE recommendations and seriously cutting of the school system budget.

By the end of his first year he is credited with bringing stability to the school system. He had begun to make changes and was moving to implement site-based management where local school councils have greater authority over decisions and central administration has less ("Smith draws rumblings from the ranks", 1992). The other major initiative of Superintendent Smith was his proposal to privatize some of the schools ("Sending a message on schools", 1994).

The COPE committee credited him for trying to reduce the bureaucracy and number of central administration staff. The co-chairman for COPE pointed out the underlying weakness of the city's system:

> Part of the problem ... is that the responsibility and authority for the school budget rest with three elected entities that often are politically competitive. The Board of Education has budget authority, but no responsibility for raising money, so it is "free' to avoid the hard issues and requests its wish list year after year.... If the D.C. Council makes cuts, the board is essentially off the hook, and can blame the council for lack of supplies, teachers, and funds. At the same time, because the council doesn't control school spending, it is more inclined to direct funds to agencies. ("Panel says D.C. School budget lacks accountability", 1992)

As an example of the conflict between the two elected bodies, at a community meeting in February 1993, City Council members were the target of community anger about schools being closed. A councilmember retorted, "You ask the school board. They put Bell [the school] on the list." The councilmember later reiterated his suggestion that the school board should be abolished and become a city agency ("Blame flies at meeting on school closings", 1993).

In 1994, Marion Barry was reelected mayor. The D.C. government was facing serious financial difficulties and could not meet its January payroll ("'94: The year that Barry came back", 1994). By February, the city faced a $722 million shortfall, and its credit was given a "junk bond" rating. The city officials had argued about school spending throughout the year. By April, Congress had appointed the D.C. Financial Control Board to take control of the city's finances and supercede the authority of the City Council and the mayor ("Roller coaster ride to who knows where", 1995). The Control Board was to remain in authority until the city had three (3) successive years of a balanced budget, which potentially may occur this spring of 2000.

COPE conducted a follow-up review of the school system and found that the buildings needed millions in repairs, and that there were inadequate supplies and outdated textbooks ("D.C. Schools declining, report says", 1995). Senator Jeffords, a Republican from Vermont, recommended that an oversight commission be established that could impose changes on the school system ("House member threatens legal action if D.C. overspends", 1995). Several Congressional committees were exploring more ways to get involved, such as vouchers, private companies, charter schools, etc. Dr. Smith supported these ideas, but one Board member questioned, "Is it just because they want to do things here in the nation's capital that they can't do in their home state?" Meanwhile the City Council was holding hearings on bills to diminish

the Board's power or abolish it altogether ("Wide discontent with schools puts D.C. Board under siege", 1995).

By November, the Senate voted to establish a federally-controlled commission to oversee the school system. Senator Byrd, Democrat of West Virginia, promptly added amendments he was concerned about—requiring a dress code and community service ("Senate endorses D.C. budget, schools commission", 1995). The concepts of Home Rule and self-determination were being sorely tested.

The situation for Dr. Smith came to a head in September of 1996 when six schools could not be opened due to fire code violations. School officials were reportedly discussing the possibility of being taken over by the Control Board or being under a court-appointed receiver. A councilmember suggested a powerful czar with total authority to fix everything ("Resounding silence greets D.C. school crisis", 1996).

By November the Control Board had decided that both the superintendent and the Board of Education had failed to manage the schools properly ("Control Board may force out superintendent", 1996). They replaced Dr. Smith with General Julius W. Becton, Jr., who, in addition to his military career, had headed the Federal Emergency Management Agency, and turned around Prairie View A & M University in Texas. A new education panel was established (D.C. Control Board to oust superintendent", 1996). The panel would later be known as the "Emergency Transitional Education Board of Trustees", and would assumed the responsibilities of the Board of Education possibly until the year 2000. The Board of Education challenged in court the constitutionality of this action.

The General brought several colleagues from the military and others into the system as his leadership team. He was authorized to establish new procedures for hiring and firing, but

authority for contracting remained with the District government and personnel rules could not be changed ("D.C. Control Board takes charge of public dchools", 1996).

By August 1997, General Becton had appointed his academic officer, Arlene Ackerman from Seattle. She would become his successor. In September he declared that school opening would be delayed three weeks while school roofs and boilers were repaired or replaced. The issue became a power struggle with Judge Kaye Christian who would not allow the work to proceed while children were in the school building. School officials, however, went ahead with the work, and the Judge ordered the schools closed ("Contest of wills contributes to chaos at D.C. Schools", 1997).

Besides opening schools late, General Becton had $62 million of overspending in salaries, possibly because of inaccurate personnel and finance records. By March 1998 he declared that he was "physically, emotionally and mentally" exhausted. He had not worked closely with parents and the community, so had little constituent support. He had lost his facilities manager. His chief financial officer was fired by the District's financial officer, Anthony Williams, who would later become mayor ("D.C. Schools chief resigns", 1998).

The General turned leadership over to Arlene Ackerman. She brought several colleagues from Washington State to serve as her administrative staff. Similar to Dr. Scott, she expressed a distrust of the administrators in the school system: She was asked how many of her top lieutenants enjoyed her trust. She replied that it was no more than she could count on one hand. About the challenges of managing the school system, she also commented, "I don't think people understand how broken the system is, and I mean <u>really</u> broken" ("The lessons of Arlene Ackerman", 1998).

A community activist commented, "If they [D.C. Public Schools] don't get their personnel system in order, they aren't going to be able to show what they need the money for, where it's going.... That brought [Superintendents] Andrew Jenkins down, Franklin Smith down and put a big cloud over General [Julius] Becton's departure. I think if she fails, it will be there ("D.C. Schools Chief Hits Familiar Barriers to Reform", 1998).

Mrs. Ackerman negotiated for a contract lasting until June 2004 which would protect her from being removed by the School Board once they regained power. Her concern was to have enough time to institute the changes she is trying to make ("Ackerman seeks raise, job security", 1999). Now that the return of the School Board, or newly configured School Board, is possible by the end of 2000 or 2001, she continues to face the issue. "The elected school board 'did not choose me.' Whether or not they will ever be able to accept me is a question mark, and whether or not we can share the same agenda is a question mark" ("Ackerman gets mixed reviews for first year", 1999).

There had been ongoing conflict between the Board of Education and the Trustees who did not even include the Board of Education representative in all their discussions. The one responsibility that remained with the School Board was the authorizing of charter schools.

In January the Court ruled that the Control Board could negate the authority of the Board of Education, but could not create a second board in its place. The Control Board then assumed the School Board's authority and retained the Trustees as their agent in managing the schools ("School Board to fight plan for trustees", 1998).

The School Board continued to meet monthly and stated that it expected Mrs. Ackerman to attend. She had not attended since she became superintendent. And by October 1998, the Control Board returned some authority to the School Board, granting it oversight of facilities and

discipline and requiring it to advise the Control Board. This was done with the full intent to return full authority to the School Board by June 2000 ("D.C. School Board wins some power", 1998). However, by March of 1999, the School Board had yet to make any recommendations ("D.C. School power shift is outlined", 1999).

Return of its responsibilities to the School Board was scheduled for June, 2000. However, city leaders – the Control Board, Mayor, and City Council – are questioning the advisability of continuing the Board of Education as currently structured. Changing the School Board would require Congress to amend the D.C. Home Rule Charter authority. But a private study group recommended reducing its numbers and electing representatives on a city-wide basis. It found that having each ward elect a representative has caused "factionalism and meddling." If the selection of the School Board were to be changed and appointed by the mayor, for example, it would require either (1) an act of Congress, or (2) a citywide election which could be blocked by Congress. Another possible governance change is to remove the "state" functions, such as enrollment counts, federal grants, and accreditation, to another agency ("Report urges smaller D.C. School Board", 1999).

After many months of discussion the City Council has recommended that the School Board consist of nine members, four appointed by the Mayor, to be confirmed by the City Council, and five to be elected. Current plans are to place this as a referendum on the ballot of the September 12, 2000 primary election ("Panel to consider referendum's wording", 2000).

In the meantime, Four members of the Board of Trustees resigned in protest because the Control Board allowed a public school to be converted to a charter school. The Trustees believed that this undermined their efforts to improve the public schools ("Four school trustees quit over charter plan", 2000). The Control Board then offered to have the four vacancies filled

by current members of the School Board. However, the School Board, which did not want fight among themselves about which five of its 11 members should fill the vacancies, took a position that they should all be appointed ("D.C. School board insists all or none be advisors", 2000). The Control Board is now looking elsewhere for new trustees.

Throughout the 150 year history of the superintendents of Washington, D.C. it can be seen that a variety of factors have impacted upon superintendent's tenure. Hugh Scott once quoted Frank Ballou, that this job "is the most difficult in the country" ("School chief Scott seeks D.C. support", 1971).

It would be interesting to note how many of the institutional changes demanded by the short term reformist superintendents were in fact implemented within the decade following their departure. This raises the intriguing question of whether school systems need a periodic cycle of outspoken assertive superintendents who take rigid stands, only to be relieved of their duties within two to three years, followed by more conciliatory, deferential superintendents who restore stability to the school system and quietly bring about change. To infer from this history those characteristics more conducive to a long tenure would identify the latter type of superintendent, well skilled in praising, appeasing, coordinating and managing, in contrast to the charismatic leader intent upon rapid change.

Certain issues, characteristic of the D.C. Public Schools both historically and contemporaneously, continue to influence public education in the city:

- DC is a unique school system dominated by issues of governance: Who controls the school system – the Congress and its committees, the City Council, or the elected School Board? Who currently determines policy – the City Council, the Mayor, the Control Board, the Educational Board of Trustees, the School Board or the Superintendent?

- D.C. may properly be identified as a colony as it continues to be denied full representation in the Senate or House of Representatives. Congress has periodically intervened in District affairs, at times with an eye to pleasing their home districts, as when they established charter schools in the District.
- Most recently, in 1996, the Congress subordinated the powers of the Mayor, City Council and School Board to an appointed Control Board. Yet rather than being restored to authority in June, 2000, the School Board may be replaced by a board that's part elected, part appointed.
- Issues relating to race still affect decision-making by the elected bodies, but historically, at least, access to quality education has also revolved around a family's economic status.
- Issues of superintendent survival may be essentially the same for all school districts – superintendents trying to introduce reforms remain the shortest time and deferential superintendents remain longer. A superintendent needs to do well in the public eye so supportive Board members will be elected.
- As we enter the 21st century, the study is particularly fascinating because the Control Board and Educational Board of Trustees have continued to support the existing superintendent. In June 2000, the Board of Education, which does not support the superintendent, is scheduled to resume its full authority.
- The three half centuries are different, and D.C. Public Schools system is on the crest of transition to a new 50 years, and possibly new governance.

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